

Mark J. Bowen

Sheriff, Hamilton County Indiana Sheriff's Office

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Assessing Central Indiana's Preparedness for a Mass Casualty Event

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Chairwoman Brooks, Ranking Member Payne, Senator Donnelly, Representatives Walorski and Young and members of the Subcommittee, it is truly an honor to appear before you today. My name is Mark Bowen and I am the elected Sheriff of Hamilton County Indiana. I would like to thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today along with my esteemed colleagues to discuss central Indiana's Preparedness for a Mass Casualty Event.

While Indiana still remains a wholesome mid-western state known primarily for its agriculture and basketball, central Indiana has grown into a thriving metropolitan community making a name for itself through outstanding primary, secondary and higher educational institutions, affordable housing, low taxes, low crime rates and high profile events such as the NCAA Final Four, PGA BMW Championship, Indianapolis 500 mile race and Mini Marathon, Brickyard 400 and the 2012 NFL Superbowl.

As Indiana continues to grow, develop and to host national events, it is more important than ever that we focus on our preparedness plans to protect Hoosiers and those who visit our fine State. As we have seen through incidents across the country from Columbine to 9-11 to Hurricane Katrina to Sandy Hook to the Boston Marathon bombings, Americans are vulnerable and Hoosiers are no exception as evidenced by the Indiana State Fair stage collapse, the Henryville tornado and the Richmond Hills gas explosion.

It is not a question of if a mass casualty event will occur in Indiana but when it will happen, how it will happen, to what magnitude it will happen and will we be prepared for it when it does happen.

Indiana has come a long way in the past ten years when it comes to preparing for mass casualty events. The events of 9-11 and other large scale disasters have forced public safety to look at large scale disasters not only from a local perspective but from a regional perspective as well.

Indianapolis Indiana and the surrounding region has been part of an Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI) for the past eight years. As a UASI region, we have worked diligently to meet the guidelines set out in Presidential Policy Directive 8. State and local officials in the Indianapolis Urban Area have been working in conjunction with the Indiana Department of Homeland Security to ensure that Threat and Hazard Identification and Risk Assessments (THIRA) are being done and updated annually, Hazard Mitigation Plans are being implemented, Core Capabilities are being identified, assets are being secured, memorandums of understanding are being executed and training is being conducted.

Unfortunately, we cannot do all this work and then put it on a shelf until an event happens. We must be ever vigilant, constantly updating our risks, evaluating our plans, updating our training and maintaining our resources and equipment. Complacency can easily become our Achilles heel. This is where we need your help, the help of our local emergency management agencies (EMA) and the help of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS).

Risk assessment, threat assessment, planning, training, resource allocation, communication and interoperability are just a few of the critical components necessary for our success in mitigating hazards and restoring order. While local first responders are the primary resources inserted into a mass casualty event, these resources are quickly overwhelmed and must rely on mutual aid from other jurisdictions including State and Federal Agencies.

Through the cooperation of iDHS, central Indiana has become a well structured and well organized UASI region and by its virtue become much more stable and better prepared to deal with major events including mass casualties. The State Fair, Henryville and Richmond hills are prime examples of success stories due in large part to the planning, training, organization and teamwork that has been developed through the efforts of Homeland Security.

It is critical that these agencies continue to function at a high level especially in times of peace and serenity in order to ensure that our local jurisdictions are up-to-date on their training; that they are conducting their threat assessments; updating their policies and procedures; maintaining their equipment; following trends and ensuring best practices; fostering and building relationships; establishing funding sources and conducting training so that we do not become complacent and be caught off guard when the event does happen!

Thank you all for taking the time to meet with us here today, for your interest in Indiana's preparedness for mass casualty and for all you do to keep the Homeland safe and secure.

Respectfully,

Mark J. Bowen

1. What are the main threats facing Indiana?

Indiana like any other state across our great nation is vulnerable to a multitude of threats both natural and man-made. In 2012 a Threat and Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment (THIRA) was conducted by the Indianapolis Urban Area in accordance with Presidential Policy Directive 8. The following Threats and Hazards were identified.

Natural <u>Acts of Nature</u>	Technological <u>Accidents or Failures of Systems</u>	Human – caused <u>Intentional Acts</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Flood• High Wind• Snow• Tornado• Hail• Ice• Heat Emergencies• Disease Outbreak• Drought• Epidemic	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• HAZMAT• Accidental Explosion• Dam/Levee Failure• Power Failure• Airplane crash• Radiological release• Train derailment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• IED/VBIED• Arson/Incendiary Attack• Cyber Attack• Chemical Agent• Conventional Attack• Hostage Taking• Biological Attack (contagious)• Biological (non-contagious)• Aircraft as a Weapon• RDD• Food and Water Attack• Nuclear Attack• Agro-Terrorism• Civil Disturbance• Cyber Incidents• Sabotage• School Violence• Terrorist Acts• Active Shooter

One of the primary natural threats/hazards facing Indiana is a tornado. Indiana is prone to tornados and has experienced many significant events in its history. The most recent event, an EF 4 tornado that touched down in Henryville, Indiana in March of 2012, is a prime example of the profound impact that a significant storm can have on a densely populated community during peak hours.

One of the primary technological threats/hazards facing Indiana is that of a hazardous materials explosion which could involve mass casualties, mass evacuation and profound public health concerns.

One of the primary human caused threats/hazards would be an act of terrorism committed at a large scale public event such as the Indy 500, the Brickyard 400, a Colts game or any number of other large scale publicly attended venues.

2. What are we doing to prepare for these events?

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3. How well are we prepared for the range of threats facing our state?

Overall, Indiana is positioned very well to deal with the range of threats facing our state. While we cannot possibly train for every possible scenario that may play out, we can and have identified what we believe to be the most likely threats and hazards facing our community. Public Safety Agencies and personnel have been briefed on these potential hazards and are enhancing their policies and procedures and their training as well. As a result of lessons learned from incidents that have taken place across the country, situational awareness has been elevated not only in the public safety arena but also in the private sector and by the general public. More attention has been given to pre-planning of events and to incident action plans. The National Incident Management System (NIMS) has become standard operating procedure and critical delays in responding to incidents, establishing command, assessing needs and executing operating procedures has been greatly reduced.

In 2012, central Indiana was tested on a number of occasions. One primary example would be the EF 4 tornado that hit Henryville, Indiana, in March. The tornado swept through a densely populated community in the middle of the day causing catastrophic damage, killing several people and injuring numerous others.

Another noteworthy event was the Richmond Hill subdivision explosion in November of 2012 which was determined to be a man-made event that resulted in the death of two people and the catastrophic damage to a three block radius in a residential community.

These events were mitigated successfully using an all hazards approach and the NIMS model.

4. How does iDHS work with FEMA to plan for the various threats facing Indiana?

This question is not applicable and left for iDHS response.

5. What assistance does the state receive from FEMA and the federal government?

This question is not applicable and is left to iDHS.

6. What training do our first responders receive?

Law enforcement first responders receive training in threat identification and assessment, first aid, hazardous materials identification and assessment, National Incident Management Systems (NIMS) procedures, perimeter security and containment, evidence preservation and collection, active shooter training and personal protective equipment (PPE) training.

The training has not only been conducted within individual departments but in conjunction with other agencies across the region. Partnerships have been developed with schools, businesses and crime watch organizations to include them in active shooter and other scenario based training.

7. What plans are in place at the various levels of government for the threats?

Many areas of local government have taken a proactive approach to the threats and are assessing their policies and procedures, identifying critical infrastructure needs, establishing Continuity of Operation Plans and Continuity of Government (COOP & COG) plans, implementing training and executing memorandums of understanding with one another and constantly updating these plans.

8. What exercises have been held in the past year?

In the past year, table top exercises have been conducted on scenarios that involved a mass casualty event at the Indy 500, an active shooter/terrorist situation at the Fort Benjamin Harrison Finance Center, an airport mass casualty, a fair train mass casualty and an active shooter public/private partnership scenario with Rolls Royce.

Hamilton County is currently working on an weather related all hazards live training drill involving police, fire and EMS that is scheduled to take place in October.

9. How have different jurisdictions worked together to plan for such events?

Discussions and training have taken place through organizations such as the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) and the Indiana Sheriff's Association (ISA). Through the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA), accredited agencies are required to implement and update all hazard and unusual occurrence policies. Table top exercises have taken place and full scale exercises have taken place and or are being discussed. Dialogue has increased throughout the region, assets and resources have been identified, memorandums of understanding have been executed, data sharing and interoperable communications have been discussed.

10. Are intra-state agreements in place to facilitate cooperation between jurisdictions?

Many local jurisdictions have been in discussions with their neighbors to facilitate cooperation and many have executed inter-local agreements to provide support in cases of emergency.

Thankfully, the mid-west mentality and desire to work together to get the job done remains strong!

11. Are the communications systems of the first responders able to talk to each other before, during and after an incident?

Central Indiana first responders work off of a number of different communications systems. Not all are interoperable before an incident takes place. In most cases, local jurisdictions are able to communicate with one another but when first responders have to travel outside of their primary areas of responsibility, communications can become an issue.

Patches can be established through most systems or radios can be switched to the State Mutual Aid frequencies but this takes time and often results in poor connectivity.

The state is working on enhancing the statewide radio network and bridging the gap by bringing the system up to P-25 standards. Hamilton County has also implemented plans to enhance their radio infrastructure and bring it up to P-25 standards.

Unfortunately, the burden is on local units of government to build and maintain these complicated systems and many simply can't afford it.